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## **CARDIN, MIKULSKI APPLAUD PASSAGE OF BILL TO PROVIDE INDEPENDENCE FOR D.C. WATER & SEWER AUTHORITY**

*Legislation restores shared power to Montgomery and Prince George's Counties*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – **Senators Benjamin L. Cardin and Barbara A. Mikulski** (both D-Md.), today announced that the Senate has unanimously passed the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority Independence Preservation Act (H.R. 5778). Sponsored in the House by Team Maryland colleague **Congressman Chris Van Hollen** (D-Md.), this legislation reaffirms the Water and Sewer Authority's (WASA) role as an independent regional entity serving Washington D.C., Maryland and Virginia ratepayers, clarifying Congress's original intent when WASA was created in 1996.

WASA provides sewage service to approximately 1.6 million customers in portions of Maryland's Montgomery and Prince George's counties and Virginia's Fairfax and Loudon, and sewage and drinking water service to more than 500,000 customers in the District of Columbia. The District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority Independence Preservation Act makes WASA financially independent from the District's chief financial officer and provides equal eligibility of residents from the district, Maryland and Virginia for WASA jobs. The law overturns a 2007 action by the District's City Council that would give hiring preference to District residents. Currently, 63 percent of WASA employees live in Maryland.

"With millions of dollars of Maryland ratepayers' funds at stake, the Water and Sewer Authority of the greater Washington, D.C. area needs independent, professional oversight," said **Senator Cardin**. "This legislation provides suburban jurisdictions in both Maryland and Virginia with the financial assurances we need and that fairness demands."

"I am proud to have worked with my Team Maryland colleagues to get this legislation passed and to stand up for residents and employees in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties," said **Senator Mikulski**. "These Counties depend on WASA for sewage services and have an ownership stake in these facilities. This bill is an important step to clarify Congress's original intent, while leveling the playing field to guarantee more Maryland residents have access to good paying WASA jobs."

With over \$100 million in suburban dollars flowing to WASA annually, Maryland and Virginia residents have a vested interest in the utility's financial condition and oversight. The District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority Independence Preservation Act will preserve the

regional control of the utility by the WASA Board of Directors, which is comprised of members from the District, Maryland and Virginia.

WASA was established in 1996 after the Environmental Protection Agency sued the District-owned utility for violations of the Clean Water Act, including using ratepayer funds to finance other city services. The District-owned utility was disbanded and control of the drinking water and wastewater operations were turned over to the new regional WASA. Prior to that, the District's utility's finances were so precarious that national organizations rated its financial instruments "junk bond" status. Today corporate leader Standard and Poor's rates WASA bonds as AA, among the highest ratings of any utility in the nation.

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